By Any Other Name

Posted originally on the Archive of Our Own at http://archiveofourown.org/works/13552011.

Rating:	Mature
Archive Warning:	Creator Chose Not To Use Archive Warnings
Category:	M/M
Fandoms:	Hannibal (TV), Romeo And Juliet - Shakespeare
Relationship:	Will Graham/Hannibal Lecter
Characters:	Hannibal Lecter, Will Graham
Additional Tags:	Inspired by Romeo and Juliet, Alternate Universe - Future, Alternate Universe - Post-Apocalypse, Faked Suicide, Suicidal Thoughts, (it's R&J you know the deal), Angst with a Happy Ending, Happy Ending, #HannibalEverAfter, Prompt Fill
Language:	English
Series:	Part 23 of Tiger's Hannigram AU fics
Collections:	#HannibalEverAfter 2018
Stats:	Published: 2018-02-02 Words: 2,023 Chapters: 1/1

By Any Other Name

by TigerPrawn

Summary

William Capulet. The first son of, and heir to, the city of Verona.
Or so his father has drummed into him from an early age.

Hannibal Montague. The first son of, and heir to, the city of Verona.
According to Hannibal’s father, self styled king of the city streets.

A pair of star-cross'd lovers...

Notes

Prompt fill for Romeo & Juliet - #HannibalEverAfter

Will woke with a start, sitting up as he heaved a breath, taking the air deep into his lungs as though he hadn't breathed in an age. Which, perhaps he hadn't.

He let out a startled laugh as he looked down at himself, well and awake. Whole and deadly and gleaming. As though he had plunged towards death and cheated it. He had put so much faith in the drug dealer, and it had paid off. Just as he had hoped and planned. This was the only way for them to escape. To be together they had to be free of their families and duties.

This was the only way.

Will took a calming breath and turned to scoot off the edge of the mortician's slab. That very same breath and all proceeding it driven from his lungs at the sight of Hannibal laying on the very next table.

*

William Capulet. The first son of, and heir to, the city of Verona.

Or so his father has drummed into him from an early age. The city was thriving and it was all thanks to his father - the business mogul and self styled king that had brought them from the

brink of ruin after the capital had fallen. It was all the city knew, all Will had ever known. But he didn't want it. He watched how his father ruled, sickened by his business - *using those he had practically enslaved to their ends. Building a new city on their bones as they were crushed beneath what was expected of them.*

It made Will sick. It was all he had ever known, but he had known how wrong it was the first time he had watched the maid lashed for tardiness. He had twisted his fists in anger and longed for a day he might take that whip to his father's hide in retribution for all he made suffer.

It was a heavier weight than the one his father expected him to eventually carry in his stead.

The only peace Will ever found was on the balcony of their rooftop garden, overlooking the city that was his to be his kingdom.

The view of the perfect city towers was marred by what his father considered imperfect. The streets below. But to Will these had a rough beauty not found in the high towers and castles that families like his resided in.

The streets were ruled over by a family of equal influence as his own - the Montague crime family. Their head was the only contender to his father's power and of equal method. His exploitation found expression through drugs and guns. He didn't rule the streets - he owned them. Enslaved as much as any of the underlings of Will's father.

Will remembered the day he first saw some of them - bustling in the alley below the balcony. These were young men, much his age. Bragging about something or other and seeking a place for something as they studied the walls.

It was that night that the graffiti first appeared.

Beautiful images of the wilderness beyond the city, that seemed a world away from the manicured roof gardens. Every morning the mural grew, until Will went at night to catch a glimpse of the artist. The one who lingered and went to work after the others moved on. The one that finally looked up one night and caught Will watching.

The one that made his heart swell with that one glance.

*

"Hannibal!" Will cried the name that had become so sweet to him, like the scented roses in his garden or those Hannibal had painted into a mural in the streets below. So different - one designed for it's perfect shape and hue, the other painted on brick in a wilderness. A rose, either way. Just like them. The same. Identically different.

He draped his body over the prone form of his lover.

"No…" Will sobbed, burying his face in the crook of Hannibal's neck. He should have told him, got word to him somehow. Explained his plan. There had been no time when his father had told him that in the morning he would be united with the son of house Chilton. Will had

laughed, of course it had only been a matter of time until he too was just a pawn in his father's business dealings.

When Will had retorted that he would rather die, his father had given him that option. Marriage or death.

It was his cousin he had sought then, champion trickster. And they had made this plan - to smuggle his body from the city once the mourning began after his apparent suicide, once the confusion started between the houses of the lack of marriage.

Then Hannibal would be told, so that they might be reunited. Start again in the wilderness and maybe, gods willing, return to challenge the city rule.

That life was nothing but a dissipating mist now. Will's sobs echoed around the morgue - a cold sound.

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Long weeks passed before he met the man in person.

It hadn't gone unnoticed by Will that his progress on the mural had slowed as each night they gazed at each other - too far to exchange words quietly in the dead of night.

His heart had near beat out of his chest the day he realised the mural was almost, finally, complete. That urged him on, the thought of never seeing the man again terrified him.

Will waited until dark to descend the tower, through his own living quarters and the exits to the walkways of this higher city, down further past the servants quarters. On and on, further down until he was at street level. He had never been this far before, and he paused a moment before he stepped out into the alley through a long forgotten door.

He was greeted by a smile, and a hand held out to him in welcome.

Hannibal Montague. The first son of, and heir to, the city of Verona. According to Hannibal's father, self styled king of the city streets.

Will had laughed at first. The son of the great crime lord, a common street artist.

But Hannibal had laughed too. And then they talked.

That night ambled into the next morning as they spilled their histories and found the common ground. Hannibal explained his love of art and how he escaped the confines of his life to do this. Will told him about the refuge of his balcony. When the mood seemed so low they suddenly laughed again.

They talked and laughed and flirted. Joked that their union could resolve all the city's problems - uniting the two competing factions. They laughed less at that as their eyes met and sought something in the other. They made love secretly in those hidden and disused rooms at the bottom of Will's tower.

It had seemed so simple a thing to fall in love and make plans to run away together. To be free of their hateful obligations. In truth it was harder than they both could both tell with words - could they leave? Could they run and leave the city to the mercy of their fathers?

*

As Will cried he smoothed his hand down Hannibal's side, knowing what he would find there - the gun holstered beneath his jacket. A smart one now, a suit as befitting his station - not the scruffy clothes he wore to hide in the streets at night. Beautiful either way.

It brought a smile to his face, even through the tears, as he pulled the gun out. He drew it back, looking at it a moment - resting it on Hannibal's chest. He couldn't be in this world without him. His balcony offered no reprieve since he had found this love. There was no way to face his life without Hannibal in it.

Will's hand trembled as he started to lift the gun, meaning to find a sweet spot for it against his skull.

And then a hand reached up and stayed him. Will jumped, startled, looking down to see Hannibal's eyes flutter open.

"I couldn't let it end this way." Hannibal croaked and Will let out another sob, this one of relief. "Neither could you."

"Hannibal?" Will choked down another threatening cry and let Hannibal slide the gun from his hand. Hannibal smiled, a gentle thing. He moved to sit on the slab, stiffly swinging his legs over the side.

"The drugs wore off just in time I see." Hannibal chuckled and shook his head. "Fate seems to always have a hand with us."

Will wanted to embrace him and hit him at the same time, though he knew he had no right given his own subterfuge.

"Hannibal, wh-?"

"I made peace with your cousin, the Prince of Katz. She told me what you had confided to her, the plan you devised. I made a plan of my own." His voice was a low rumble that pulled every nerve tight within Will.

There was something in the tone that was both loving and dangerous. This man stood to rival his father one day, to rival Will in essence. In their father's places they were destined to continue the blood feud started before they were born.

And yet they had fallen in love. Hadn't they?

Will wanted to believe it but there was something of a manipulation here, he was sure. He read people well - as did his father. It was what had brought him to such power. It was what screamed at Will now - that this was dangerous.

But he didn't move. Didn't step back, but leaned in.

Hannibal parted his legs so that Will could stand between them, wrapping their arms around each other. He didn't imagine Hannibal's relief. If there was a manipulation then perhaps Will wasn't the subject.

"What did you plan?" Will asked, relaxing his body against Hannibal's in a want to give him everything, to take everything.

He felt a little bereft as Hannibal pulled back, framing his face in his hands and smiling a wicked smile that made Will shiver.

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"Don't do that." Will chuckled and held out his hand to his cousin. She smiled up at him and stood from the one knee she had dropped to as soon as she had entered the sumptuous dining room..

He heard Hannibal huff a laugh too. "Always amusing, Katz. Maybe we should bring back court jesters."

She flashed a grin at him before turning back to Will. "Only paying my respects to my fellow princes. Kings now I suppose." She started to wander the room, playing a hand lightly over the roses and skulls that decorated the dining table where the heads of all the local families were soon to be seated for the first event of this new order. "And collect my due of course."

She stepped behind one of the chairs, pulling it out and sitting without a word. It was the least they owed her - the head of her own house given that none of this would have been possible without her.

He looked over at Hannibal, whose lips curled into a smile - appreciative of her methods. After all, she had assisted with his manipulation too.

It had been easy on Will's apparent death to incite their families. Will's family had gathered to mourn in anger, it had been a simple thing from Hannibal to cajol his father and their family to use the chance to threaten the rule of the Capulet's of the upper city. Simpler still to have it look like Katz struck a fatal blow, when in fact Hannibal had already taken the same drug as Will.

Hannibal's death at the hands of the beloved Capulet cousin had stepped the threats up to violence. As Will and Hannibal slumbered as in death, their parents slaughtered each other in the name of hate.

And so they woke to sweep the slate clean and unite their houses in the name of love.

House Capulet-Montague. The first family of Verona.

By any other name it would be as strong as those within.

As strong as the love for which they died, and lived.

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